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ABSTRACT

The results of two large scale assessment efforts by the United States Department of Defense Office of Dependents Schools (DoDDS) are set forth in tabular form in this booklet. First described is the initial DoDDS assessment of composition skills--administered to several thousand eighth and eleventh grade students in the spring of 1978--that consisted of a set of survey questions and the collection of two writing samples from each pupil. Pupil essays, scored on a system developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), are compared to essays obtained in NAEP's 1974 national assessment of composition. An analysis of the survey responses mentions that over half the students state that they write less than three times per week in English classes, with 30% of eleventh and 21% of eighth grade students reporting that they write less than once per week. The second test described is the annual DoDDS English program assessment given to 1,600 eighth and eleventh grade students worldwide in the DoDDS system. Scores were compared to and averaged higher than the average pupil score on the NAEP. Weak areas cited for eighth grade students are literal reading comprehension and organization of sentences into a paragraph; for eleventh grade students weak areas are interpretive reading comprehension, English usage, and selecting topic sentences. (AEA)

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DODDS COMPOSITION ASSESSMENT RESULTS

DoDDS Composition Assessment Results

The first DoDDS assessment of composition skills was administered in the spring of 1978 to several thousand pupils in grades 8 and 11 in sampled schools from the three geographic regions. The assessment consisted of a set of survey questions and the collection of two writing samples from each pupil. This report is a concise summary of the results of that assessment.

Pupil essays were scored using a descriptive approach of the type and frequency of errors in mechanics and usage. The scoring procedures were developed and standardized by the National Assessment of Educational Progress for use in scoring the 1970 and 1974 national assessments of composition. An analysis of the results of the student survey reveals the following:

1. 79% of the 11th graders and 92% of the 8th graders surveyed report they were registered in required English classes.

2. Over half of the respondents state that they write less than three times per week in their English classes, with 30% of the 11th and 21% of the 8th graders reporting they write less than once per week in their English classes.

3. 60% of the 11th and 51% of the 8th graders report spending in excess of 2 hours per week writing for classes other than English classes.

4. Over 60% of the respondents report favorable attitudes toward writing, with over 94% reporting they engaged in some form of recreational writing outside of school.

5. Over 70% of the respondents describe their writing abilities as average to slightly above average, while 16% rate their writing abilities below average.

The results of the scoring of the writing samples collected from students in grades 8 and 11 are presented in tabular form. The frequency of mechanical and usage errors is reported for each group and contrasted with the frequency counts from the 1974 national assessment of writing.

Table 1 displays the straightforward counts of the number of words and sentences in the average "hypothetical" essay. In addition, these tables present the word errors and sentence errors both in raw counts as well as in relationship to a ratio of 100 words.

Table 2 displays the observed range of performance by presenting the percentage of pupils at each grade level scoring at a scoring interval. It is helpful to know, for example, that 29.5% of the 8th grade pupils' essays contained 0 or 1 spelling error, 28% contained 2 or 3 errors, and 42.5% contained 4 or more spelling errors.

Table 1. Error Count for Eighth and Eleventh Grade Essays

	Average Number of Words Per Essay		Average Number of Sentences Per Essay	
	8th	11th	8th	11th
DoDDS	159.0	225.6	10.72	14.40
National Assessment	128.5	137.2	9.30	9.40

Mechanics: Word Errors

	Average Number of Errors Per Essay		Average Number of Errors Per 100 Words	
	8th	11th	8th	11th
Spelling:				
DoDDS	5.7	5.7	3.6	2.5
National Assessment	5.3	3.4	2.6	3.0
Word Choice:				
DoDDS	0.7	1.1	0.4	0.5
National Assessment	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.6
	8th	11th	8th	11th
Capitalization:				
DoDDS	1.2	0.6	0.8	0.3
National Assessment	*	*	*	*

Mechanics: Sentence Errors

Punctuation:				
DoDDS	2.2	3.4	2.1	2.4
National Assessment	3.0	*	3.2	*
Agreement:				
DoDDS	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.6
National Assessment	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.6

Table 1. Error Count for Eighth and Eleventh Grade Essays (Cont'd)

	Average Number of Errors Per Essay		Average Number of Errors Per 100 Words	
	8th	11th	8th	11th
Mechanics: Sentence Errors				
Run-on:				
DoDDS	1.2	0.9	1.1	0.6
National Assessment	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.6
Awkward:				
DoDDS	2.6	3.9	2.4	2.7
National Assessment	2.6	1.8	*	*
End Marks:				
DoDDS	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
National Assessment	*	*	*	*

*Not available. The National Assessment scoring criteria did not include this data category.

Table 2. Range of Pupil Performance
(Percentages of students by performance level)

Errors Per 100 Words	Spelling		Usage		Capitalization	
	8th	11th	8th	11th	8th	11th
0 or 1 error per 100 words	29.5	38.5	93.5	95.0	80.0	95.5
2 or 3 errors per 100 words	28.0	35.0	6.0	5.0	14.5	3.5
4 or more errors per 100 words	42.5	14.0	.5	*	4.5	1.0

DODDS ENGLISH PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

DoDDS English Program Assessment

During May 15-19, 1978, the DoDDS language arts tests were given to 1,600 pupils worldwide in our DoDDS system. The tests are given each year in May to 13- and 17-year old pupils, grades 8 and 11, respectively. The language arts tests provide a measure of academic progress in vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, sentence and paragraph analysis, and English usage.

Pupil performance on the objectives of the language arts test was generally within the expectancy range developed by DoDDS educators. In the areas of reading comprehension, the DoDDS average pupil performance was higher than the average pupil score shown by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The weakest areas for grade 8 pupils were literal reading comprehension and organization of sentences to form a paragraph. The weakest areas for grade 11 pupils were interpretive reading comprehension, English usage, and selection of a topic sentence for a paragraph.

Spelling and punctuation scores for grade 8 pupils were within the expectancy range set by DoDDS educators; for grade 11 pupils, however, the scores were below the expectancy level. Grade 11 pupils scored above the expectancy level set by DoDDS educators for items related to the literal comprehension of details.

A detailed analysis of the test results with plans developed for instructional changes will be considered during the November 1978 systemwide meeting of the DoDDS language arts and reading coordinators. Ideas and recommendations from teachers, principals, and other school staff regarding the language arts test results should be sent to your regional language arts coordinator.

The bars in the graphs displaying the results of the language arts tests **(Tables 3 and 4)** represent the program expectancy range set by DoDDS teacher groups. The expectancy ranges represent desirable levels of group performance, not predicted or expected pupil performance levels. The lower end of the bar represents minimally acceptable levels of group performance. The upper end of the bar represents desirable or optimal levels of group performance, that is, levels at which group performance would reflect high quality programs.

Table 3. Grade 8 Language Arts Results

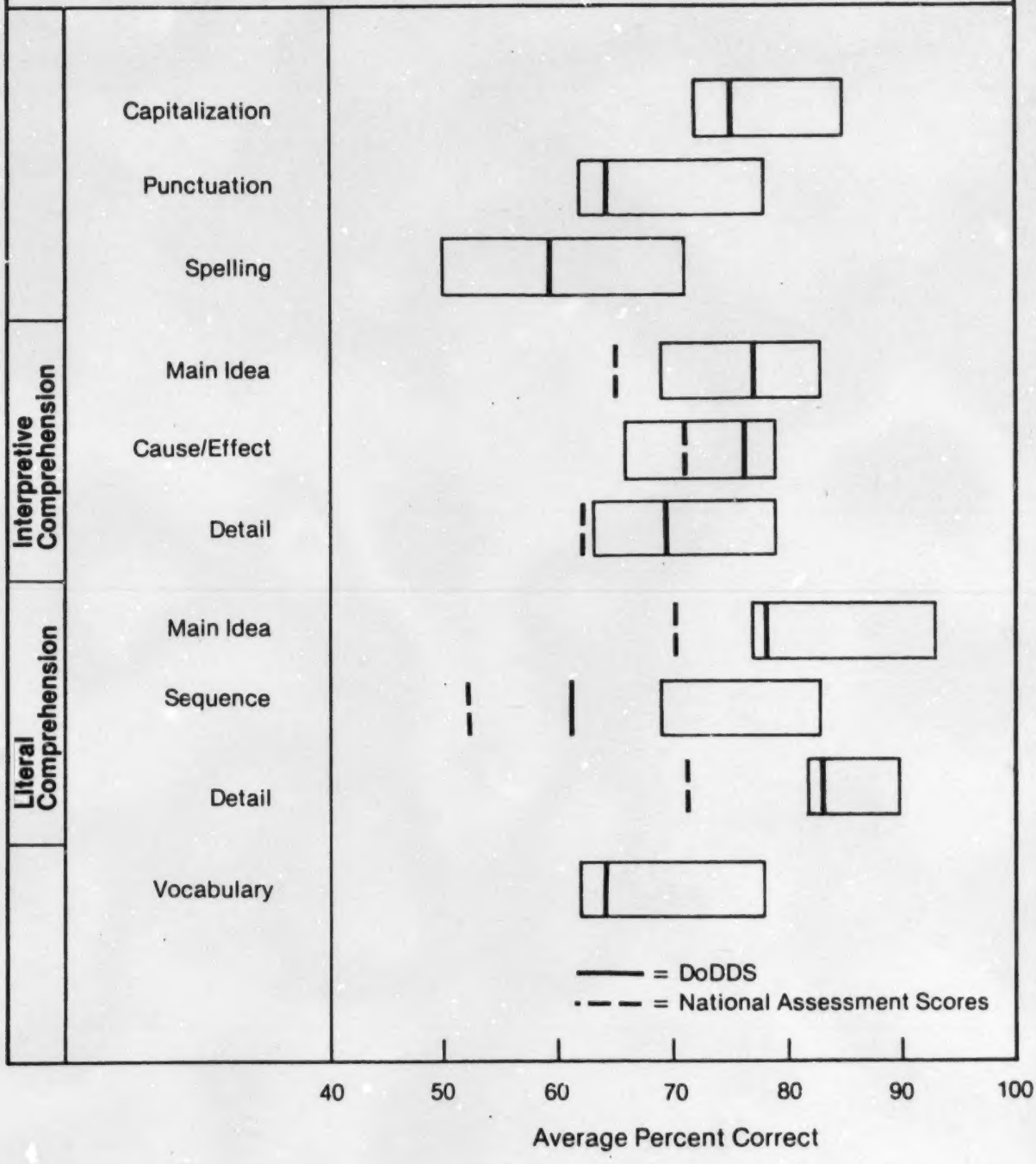

Table 3. (Continued) Grade 8 Language Arts Results

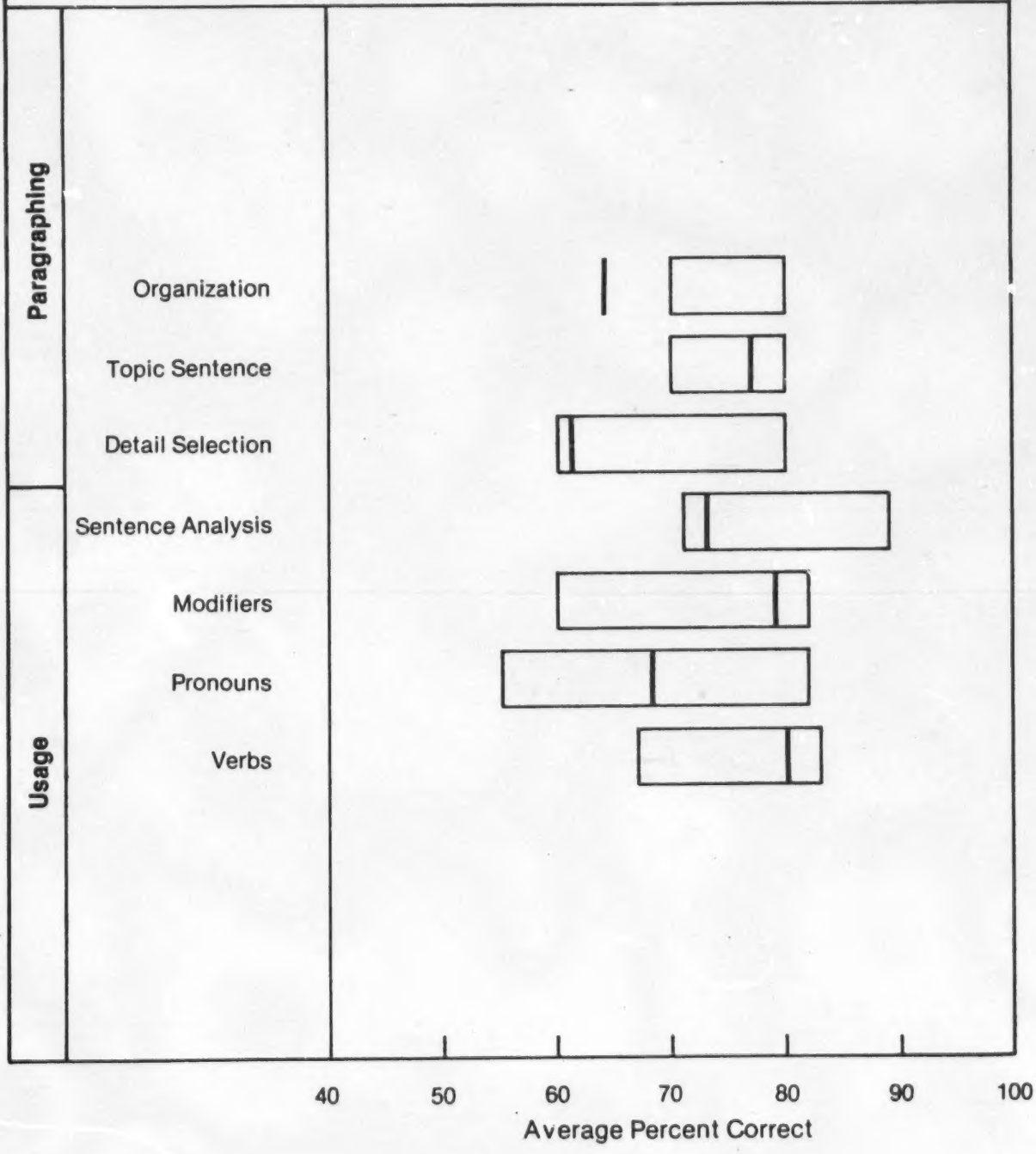

Table 4. Grade 11 Language Arts Results

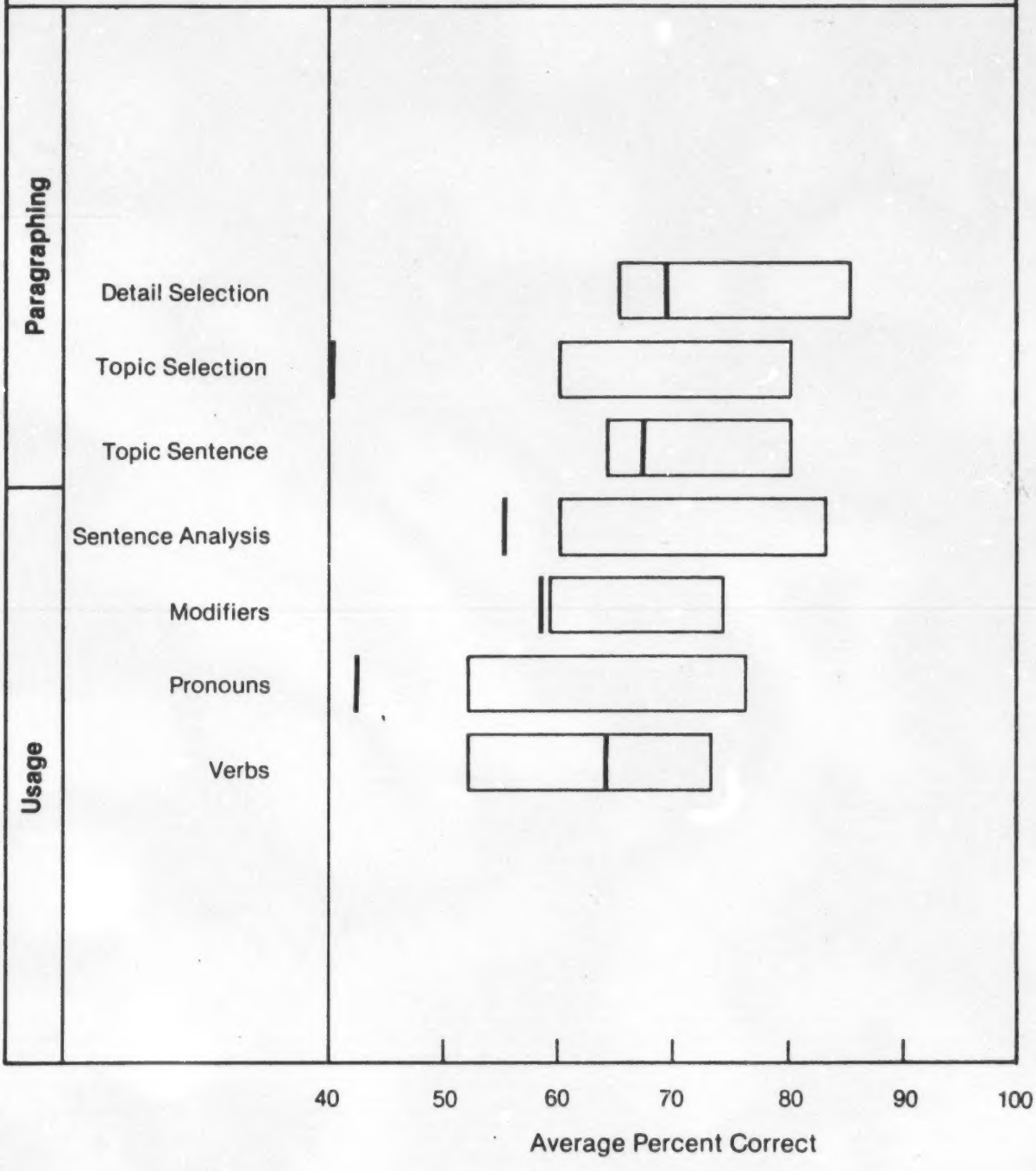

Table 4. (Continued) Grade 11 Language Arts Results